

**THEORIZING AN INTEGRATIVE-QUALITATIVE
INTENTIONAL BEHAVIOR MODEL IN ROMANIAN
PRESCHOOL TEACHERS FOR SDG4 (*EQUAL ACCESS
TO QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION*)**

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Abstract: *Quality education is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations in 2015. SDG 4 refers to guaranteeing inclusive and equitable quality education for all, as well as fostering opportunities for lifelong learning for everyone. Equal access to high-quality pre-primary education is one of DSG4's 11 indicators, and it will be discussed further in this study. The goal of this study is to lay a theoretical foundation for the development and validation of an integrative-qualitative intentional behavior scale in Romanian early childhood education and care system. Our theoretical research will also be used to develop an integrative-qualitative intentional behavior prediction methodology that can be used to predict preschool teachers' integrative-qualitative intentional behavior in ECEC teachers and aid educational decision-makers in developing timely interventions that increase the likelihood of success. The study's major findings point to important components that might help Romanian educational decision-makers improve SDG4 outcomes.*

Keywords: *SDG4; Early Childhood Education and Care; theory of planned behavior; integrative-qualitative; intentional behavior.*

1. Sustainable Development Goal 4

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4 or Global Goal 4) focuses on high-quality education. It is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations in September 2015. SDG 4's original title was providing inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

SDG 4 is made up of ten goals that are tracked by 11 indicators. Free primary and secondary education; equal access to high-quality pre-primary education; affordable technical, vocational, and higher education; an increase in the number of people with relevant financial skills; the elimination of all forms of discrimination in education; universal literacy and numeracy; and education for sustainable development and global citizenship are the seven outcome-oriented targets. Building and improving inclusive and safe schools, increasing the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries, and expanding higher education scholarships for developing countries are the three strategies to achieve the goals (Lupascu, et. al., 2014; Maier, 2019; Maier, et al., 2019; Panisoara, et al., 2014; Panisoara et. al., 2020).

SDG 4 aims to offer high-quality, easily accessible education as well as extra learning opportunities for children and young people. The achievement of universal literacy and numeracy is one of its goals. In the learning environment, this is a critical component in acquiring information and important skills (Roman, & Dughi, 2007; Roman, & Redeş, 2019; Roman, & Redeş, 2019; Castanheira, et. al., 2018; Clipa, & Greciuc, 2018; Roman, & Balas, 2015; Roman, & Bran, 2015). As a result, there is an urgent need to create new educational facilities as well as update existing ones in order to offer secure, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all.

The prevalence of extreme poverty, insurgency, community disputes, and other issues has slowed development in many nations. Children from low-income families are more likely than their wealthy peers to drop out of school. Disparities between rural and urban communities remain significant.

Education for All has been a well-known term since 1990, and it has gotten a lot of attention from numerous development courses throughout the world. It was selected as SDG 4 because it was deemed critical from the start of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Education is seen as a key component of long-term progress, nation-building, and peace. Children and teenagers who learn certain skills such as reading, writing, and counting have a brighter future than those who do not. Globalization demands fast adaptation and learning to deal with new technologies as the globe evolves.

The importance of education in ensuring long-term development applies not only to developing countries, but to the entire world. The major purpose of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) is to provide an inclusive

and high-quality education that improves both the learner's standard of living and the community's future. Remarkable progress has been made in enhancing both boys and girls' access to education, particularly at the primary school level. Increased access, on the other hand, does not always imply greater educational quality or primary school completion. Increased school enrollment did not translate into improved educational performance, as one out of every four nations failed to reach the minimal math competency criteria. Millions of youngsters were still absent from school by the end of 2019. The closing of schools in 2020 as part of the COVID-19 control measures is having a negative influence on learning outcomes. It has influenced more than 90% of the world's student population, influencing the education of an estimated 1.5 billion children and young adults. Students' ability to participate in learning opportunities throughout the world has also been hampered by a lack of internet access. At least one-third of the world's youngsters lacked the technology essential to participate in remote learning during the COVID-19 outbreak and the resulting widespread school cancellations. Inequality in schooling has also risen as a result of the epidemic.

The overall purpose of the indicator target is to ensure that by 2030, all girls and boys have access to high-quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education, preparing them for primary school. Two metrics support this goal: the proportion of children under the age of five who are on track in terms of health, learning, and psychological well-being, and the rate of organized learning engagement (one year before the official primary school enrollment age), by gender.

2. Theory and planned behavior and integrative-qualitative intentional behavior

The essential part of this idea, according to experts, is people' purpose to exhibit a specific behavior that is evident to those around them. The planned behavior is unique to each individual, taking into consideration the variables that underpin each individual's motivation as well as the work he is prepared to expend to reach the objective (Ajzen, 1991).

TPB is an extension of rational action theory (TRA), which was established by Ajzen and Fishbein in 1975 and refined in 1980. (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). TRA incorporates cognitive, emotional, and conative components, similar to the three-component model of attitudes (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015), implying that attitudes explain people' behaviors as an indication of their behavior (Balog and Cristescu, 2009). The hypothesis is predicated on the assumption that researchers must quantify the subjective standards that impact a person's intentions to engage in a particular action (Schiffman and Wisenblit, 2015).

TPB is a theoretical foundation that aids in the comprehension of the decision-making process used by preschool instructors (Rad, et. al., 2022; Rad, et. al., 2022).

Beginning with the theory of rational action, TPB is regarded by scholars as a behavioral theory that explains individual behavior based on attitudes, serving as a reference point in the study of individual actions (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2005; Buaphiban and Truong, 2017). The premise underpinning this notion is that preschool teachers generally exhibit high levels of sensitivity. The understanding of the decision-making process requires knowledge of the stages involved as well as the consequences they have on integrative-qualitative intentional behavior. Every day, people are confronted with a great number of decisions that must be taken, each with a varying level of importance and influence. It occurs on a continuous basis in an individual's life, progressing from basic decisions to complicated ones. Exposure to environmental information, as well as the day-to-day problems of a person's existence, cause them to prioritize decisions.

3. Theoretic model of integrative-qualitative intentional behavior in ECEC

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was developed to forecast a person's intention to participate in a given behavior at a specific time and location. The hypothesis was designed to describe all actions over which humans may exercise self-control. Behavioral intent is a fundamental component of this paradigm; behavioral intents are impacted by one's attitude about the likelihood that the conduct will produce the expected result, as well as one's subjective assessment of the risks and advantages of that outcome.

Behavioral accomplishment is based on both motivation (intention) and ability, according to the TPB (behavioral control). It distinguishes between three types of beliefs: behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. The TPB is made up of six constructions that show how much control a person has over their actions.

1. Attitudes - This refers to the degree to which a person evaluates the conduct of interest favorably or unfavorably. It requires taking into account the consequences of carrying out the conduct.
2. Behavioral intention - This refers to the motivating variables that drive a certain conduct; the greater the intention to execute the activity, the more likely the behavior will be completed.
3. Subjective norms - This is the notion that the majority of people accept or disapprove of the action. It refers to a person's opinions about whether peers and important individuals in his or her life believe he or she should engage in the conduct.

4. Social norms - These are the conventional regulations of behavior among a group or individuals, as well as in a broader cultural context. In a group of individuals, social standards are regarded normative, or standard.
5. Perceived power - This refers to the perception of the presence of elements that might help or hinder the performance of an activity. Perceived power influences a person's perception of behavioral control over each of these aspects.
6. Perceived behavioral control - This relates to a person's view of how easy or difficult it is to do the desired activity. Perceived behavioral control fluctuates between contexts and behaviors, resulting in a person's sense of behavioral control changing depending on the scenario. This theoretical component was introduced later, resulting in a move from the Theory of Reasoned Action to the Theory of Planned Behavior.

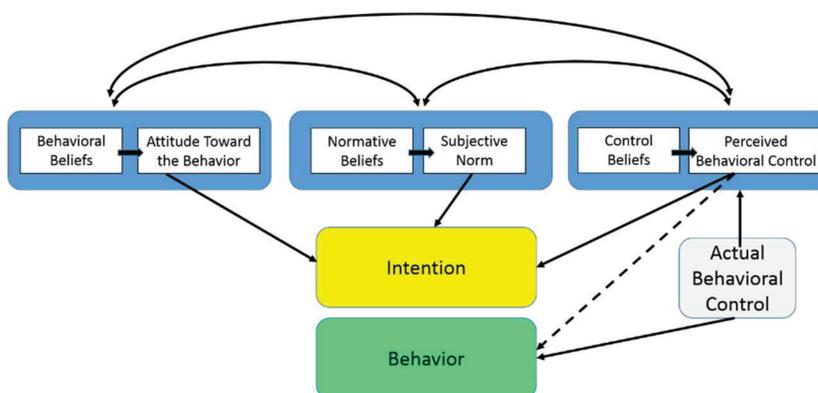


Figure 1 – Main components of TPB (*apud Ajzen, 1991*)

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is a collection of essential individual beliefs (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control) that influence people's intentions to engage in specific behaviors. Due to its successful application to a range of human activities, TPB has been used as a framework in a number of research examining teachers' intentions toward implementing inclusive education. However, there has been minimal effort to synthesize these researches.

Opoku et al., 2021, for example, looked at published articles on inclusive education from 2007 to 2019 that used the TPB as a framework to analyze reporting trends and identify research needs. Five keywords were used

to search nine databases for research, giving 604 results, 22 of which fulfilled the pre-determined inclusion and quality evaluation requirements. Although the results of certain studies show that TPB can predict teachers' intentions, the link between the predictors and actual conduct is yet unknown. Furthermore, the conclusions of the qualitative and quantitative research differed.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) asserts that behavioral intention and perceived behavioral control can predict behavior, with behavioral intention being a function of attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control.

Teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, their perceptions of social pressure from influential individuals to implement inclusive education, and their trust in professional training for engaged personnel have all been shown to have a significant impact on their intention to implement inclusive education (Yan & Sin, 2014). This goal, together with their confidence in professional training for participants, foreshadows their true inclusive practice. The impact of teachers' views of public pressure and the appropriateness of professional training on their intention and action toward inclusive education is substantial. TPB appears to provide a robust theoretical framework for understanding inclusive behaviors among instructors (Yan & Sin, 2014).

Inclusive Education (IE) is defined as providing students with the opportunity to learn alongside their peers in their appropriate school community while also being treated as a contributing member (Ward, 2018). In Saskatchewan, the objective is to integrate all children into the regular school system. Teachers are under more pressure than ever before to support inclusive policies in educational institutions. Educators' worries about IE are frequently the consequence of the severity of the condition and practical concerns about application in the classroom (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Burke & Sutherland, 2004). Understanding student teachers' views regarding IE allows them to have their concerns addressed early on, and suitable information for implementation may be supplied.

4. Conclusions

Students are labeled and denied equal access to social and curricular opportunities when they are separated into "special needs" and "mainstream" schools. As a result, the legislation has supported the inclusion of children with disabilities and special educational needs in conventional schools for more than 20 years. However, because of inconsistent findings and a scarcity

of well-designed research in this field, it's unclear if inclusive education is advantageous in terms of achieving positive educational and social outcomes (Lindsay, 2007; Korinek, et al., 1999).

Attitudes among mainstream teachers may be a barrier to successful inclusive initiatives (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995; de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2010). Teachers are largely supportive of the concept of inclusion, but many believe that putting it into practice is difficult (Avramadis & Norwich, 2002). However, it has been shown that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are more apathetic, if not hostile (de Boer et al, 2010).

Access to and participation in quality education is required for a sustainable society to function properly. Education is more than just a preparation for entering the work market. Education must be viewed as a lifelong process that prepares future generations for challenges by promoting creativity, meritocracy, constructive critical thinking, curiosity, conduct, and freedom.

The OECD also emphasizes "student well-being" as an essential aspect in the educational process. In addition to the instructional process, the school provides pupils with their first engagement with society, which has a significant impact on their attitude and conduct. Students learn to be resilient, socialize, and to be ambitious in their life goals. The PISA III study emphasizes the link between school anxiety, bullying in schools, and low academic achievement. Furthermore, the student-teacher interaction has a significant influence on student growth, with a sense of belonging to the community being a vital variable in academic development.

In conclusion, the standard study findings highlight the relevance of primary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, their perceived collective self-efficacy beliefs, and their views of their school management's expectations for their inclusive education goals. Using Hellmich's work, the authors were able to test Ajzen's 'Theory of Planned Behavior' (1991) to some extent (Hellmich et al., 2019). The findings of the study show how primary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and aims for inclusive teaching are reflected in their self-reported daily activities in heterogeneous classes. Our research, on the other hand, was unable to show that primary school teachers' collective self-efficacy attitudes on inclusive education have an impact on their practices in diverse classrooms.

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